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Teaching Reading As An Integrated Skill: An Evaluation of Two Popular ESL Textbooks

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University of San Francisco

Teaching Reading As An Integrated Skill: An Evaluation of Two Popular ESL Textbooks

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

By
Ingrid McVanner
September 2014

Abstract

As the population of non-native English speakers rises in the United States, so too does the need for effective English language instruction, and with that, effective instructional materials. With a growing population of adult English language learners with below basic prose literacy, the need for effective adult English language literacy instruction is also evident. Because people do not use one skill at a time, this project evaluates the reading materials in two adult English language integrated skills textbooks from major publishers of ESL materials in order to provide insight into the preparation of effective integrated skills textbooks designed for adult ELLs. Reading lessons from five units from each book are evaluated in terms of physical description of the activities, the required actions for each activity, and assumptions made about the underlying reasoning behind the creation of each activity. Results found strengths in regards to visual appeal and coherence. Results also found room for improvement in regard to decision-making by students in the classroom, use of students' intelligence, cultural understanding, and critical language awareness. Recommendations are giving for improving the lessons and evaluating further materials.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The prominent language of use in the United States is undeniably English. That said, the number of people who speak a language other than English in the home has grown 158.2% from 1980 to 2010 (Ryan, 2013, p. 7). Moreover, of those who do not speak English at home, the percentage of the population who report that they speak English less than "very well" increases significantly with age (Ryan, 2013, p. 9). Furthermore, 44% of those adults who were found to have "below basic" prose literacy in the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) spoke no English before entering school. Not only does an inability to read in English prevent students from educational success, it can affect their ability to do such basic but necessary things as gain employment, travel on public transportation, or even understand health-related written materials.

As the growth of the non-native English speaking population in the United States soars, (Ryan, 2013, p. 7) so too does the necessity for effective and engaging educational materials that prepare students of all ages for proficiency in all four skills in English. Integrated skills textbooks need to take into account the fact that "there are clear differences between oral language and written language" (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 23). However, a problem presents itself in the preparation of materials designed specifically for adult learners of English. With the continued emergence of theories on age of acquisition and adult learners, such as the critical period hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) and andragogy (Knowles, 1973) instructors are met with the challenge of crafting educational materials designed specifically to aid in the acquisition of English by adult English Language Learners (ELLs). In order to meet the very specific needs of adult ELLs, several factors must be taken into account when preparing educational materials,

such as the use of significant content that utilizes students' intelligence and ability to think critically, as well as the involvement of students in their own learning.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide insight into the preparation of effective integrated skills textbooks for adult ELLs by evaluating two textbooks printed by popular publishers of TESOL materials. Guided by frameworks crafted by Andrew Littlejohn (2000, 2011), this paper will focus on those sections of the textbooks specifically dedicated to teaching reading, and will evaluate those sections through the lens of two particular theories: adult learner theory (andragogy), and critical literacy. Through the evaluation of these textbooks, this project will seek to highlight strengths and point out areas for improvement, to analyze gaps in materials, and to offer suggestions for enhancing and supplementing the reading instruction presented in integrated skills textbooks.

Theoretical Framework

The evaluation of the two textbooks examined herein will be based on two frameworks offered by Andrew Littlejohn (2000, 2011). First, Littlejohn's (2000) *Futures Curriculum* for language instruction seeks to "ensure that what goes on in our classrooms is educationally nutritious" (p. 5). In order to do so, one must evaluate materials to ensure that they are more than just easily digestible, but rather offer substantial benefits to the learner. Using the framework offered by Littlejohn (2011) for the "analysis of materials 'as they are,'" rather than as they are practiced and supplemented in the classroom, this project will seek to evaluate the textbooks in terms of two theoretical areas (p. 181).

The first theoretical area is adult learner theory, or andragogy. Malcom Knowles (1977) explains the emergence of andragogy as a means by which theorists separated traditional

pedagogy from the teaching of adult learners (p. 206). Andragogy is based off of four main assumptions that separate it from pedagogy, namely that as a person matures she moves from dependency to self-directedness, that she accumulates experience that is invaluable to learning, that the readiness to learn is societally rather than biologically driven, and that learning for adults becomes more problem-centered rather than subject-centered (Knowles, 1973, pp. 45-48). It emphasizes a more independent approach to adult education; namely, teachers as facilitators of self-directed learning. Materials meant for the education of adults should, in order to be effective, encourage student-centered learning as opposed to teacher-directed learning. The adult learner as an experienced, self-directed learner and problem solver, will benefit far more from materials that take these particular traits into account. The analysis of the textbooks herein will evaluate the materials in terms of whether the units on reading are self-directed or more dependent on the instructor.

The second area is critical literacy. Although the theory of critical literacy has seen many variations and evolutions, Allan Luke (2012) traces its lineage and explains that the approaches "view language, texts, and their discourse structures as principal means for representing and reshaping possible worlds" (pp. 8-9). Andrew Lohrey (1998) describes it as "the ability to continually ask questions of a text (talking back to the text) in ways that enable us to look below the surface meanings to see how we are being influenced and affected" (p. 8). Critical literacy is about much more than understanding words and grammatical structures; it is about how discourses influence and shape our understanding of the world. By taking this approach, English language learners do not merely learn the mechanics of the English language; rather, they become engaged in the material in a meaningful way by reading critically, which in turn leads to better understanding. By analyzing the textbooks herein through this theoretical area, this

project will evaluate their efficacy in engaging and instructing ELLs in a substantial and profound manner.

Significance of the Project

This project offers a significant benefit for the creators and publishers of TESOL materials, especially those that focus on integrated skills. By reviewing and evaluating two textbooks from publishers that can be seen as ubiquitous in the educational arena, this project will highlight those strengths which will most benefit students seeking to improve their English literacy skills. More importantly, this project will indicate those areas, such as significant content and student-led decision-making in the classroom, which exhibit room for improvement in their treatment of teaching reading skills to adult learners. Ultimately, this project will serve to offer clues for the preparation of integrated skills materials that provide effectual reading instruction.

This project also offers significant benefits for English language instructors. By evaluating textbooks from very popular publishers, this project will provide instructors some insight into the specific materials they are likely to encounter as they prepare to teach classes. Furthermore, this project may serve as a guide for instructors seeking to evaluate their own materials for effectiveness in reading instruction, and may help those instructors to supplement instruction where they find their materials lacking.

This project ultimately offers a significant benefit for adult English Language Leaners, in that it seeks to offer guidance for those instructors and publishers pursuing ways in which to make their TESOL materials more effective, particularly in reference to the integrated skills textbooks often found in ESL classrooms. As instructors and publishers become more adept at evaluating and adapting their materials, students will benefit more and more from stronger

educational materials. By enhancing literacy instruction through the improvement of language learning materials, publishers and instructors can thus help students overcome the "handicap" of illiteracy and empower them to not only improve their language skills but to improve their ability to integrate and flourish in their communities (Freire, 2005, p. 3).

Definition of Terms

Integrated Skills: Integrated skills refers to the four fundamental skills associated with language learning: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Integrated skills textbooks focus on the instruction of all four skills rather than specializing in one skill.

Literacy: Throughout this paper, unless otherwise noted, literacy refers specifically to a learner's ability to read in English.

Adult Learner: For the purpose of this project, adult learner refers to people eighteen years of age and older in a post-secondary educational setting.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Daily use of language involves a constant integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Therefore, it is important in language instruction to integrate the four skills in a meaningful, authentic manner. Many English language textbooks are designed to do just that. In choosing which textbooks to adopt in the classroom, one must ensure that the materials chosen simultaneously and effectively meet the needs of both the curriculum and the students themselves. In the case of the adult classroom, this means bearing in mind those particular traits that distinguish adult learners from younger student populations.

I have organized my review of the literature around two categories: Adult Literacy Instruction and the English Language Learner, and The English Language Textbook. Adult Literacy Instruction and the English Language Learner contains studies that investigate instructional strategies for literacy instruction, as well as those strategies that specifically address literacy and adult ELLs. The second category, The English Language Textbook, contains studies investigating the use of authentic materials and contexts in English language textbooks and questions their claims to authenticity.

Adult Literacy Instruction and the English Language Learner

There is much research devoted to the adult learner and literacy instruction. Beder, Lipnevich, and Robinson-Geller (2007) explored the issue in order to find out "[w]hat instructional approaches typify adult literacy education in the United States" (p. 63). Over the course of a year, 598 participants, all teachers, from 12 different states completed a web-based survey regarding their instructional approaches to literacy education. The final survey given

comprised 29 core instructional practice items and 14 background items, with questions structured on a Likert-type scale. Final data was analyzed using statistical software.

Through the analysis of the data, three "pure" factors in instructional approaches were identified: Meaning Making, Basic Skills/Individualized Group Instruction, and Basic Skills/Teacher-Led Group (Beder et al., 2007, p. 67). In the study, 230 respondents used one of the three approaches alone, 311 used a combination of two or all three approaches, and 57 used approaches classified as "other" (Beder et al., 2007, p. 69). Factors influencing the approaches used included instructional level, sponsoring organization, and enrollment pattern; however, teachers' job status and paid preparation time had little to no influence on the approach.

Beder et al. provide with their study some "sense of what often appears to be confusion" in regards to typical American instructional approaches to adult literacy education (2007, p. 71). Although it is enlightening to gain a picture of the kind of practices being used in classrooms around the nation, there is not accompanying qualitative review of this data. No indication is given as to the efficacy of the approaches; data given only reflects the kinds of approaches used.

Hock and Mellard (2011) explored the efficacy of explicitly teaching learning strategies for reading comprehension. Investigating four strategies, the Bridging Strategy, the Building Fluency Strategy, the Prediction Strategy, and the Summarization Strategy, Hock and Mellard sought to discover whether "strategic instruction in learning strategies produced significantly different gains in reading comprehension or reading-related subskills compared to typical AE instruction" (2011, p. 140). In order to answer this inquiry, Hock and Mellard designed a study in which learners in control classes received instruction in reading-related topics, while experimental groups received instruction in one of the four strategies. Participants were pre- and post-tested in order to measure the effects of instruction. The study was conducted at a variety of

Midwestern AE programming sites, including a community college and a public school district. A total of 375 learners participated, ranging in age from 16 to 74 years. Courses in the program followed an 8-week cycle.

The results of the data showed no significant improvement in reading skills. In an attempt to shed light on this, Hock and Mellard hypothesized that various differences between this study and previous studies indicating successful use of learning strategies influenced the results by influencing learners' engagement, persistence, and outcomes (2011, p. 145). These factors include educational settings, student populations, and learner characteristics. Although the interventions tested in the study had previously proven successful with adolescent learners, the data proved that solutions cannot be simply transferred from one population to the next. Although intensive strategy instruction has proven successful with other populations, the results of Hock and Mellard's (2011) study question whether these methods can be used in an adult educational setting at all.

Although Hock and Mellard (2011) included a variety of ethnic backgrounds in their study and they indicate that all participants were required to either be citizens or be authorized to work in the U.S., they do not indicate whether or not any of the participants were not native English speakers. This may have influenced the use of strategy instruction, as some studies have shown that some L1 instructional strategies do not work with L2 learners. Additionally, participants were compensated as incentive to remain in the study; it is questionable whether this may have had an effect on performance as well as on attendance, which was a measure in the data.

The findings of Beder et al. (2007) and Hock & Mellard (2011) relate to my project in that any creation of instructional material must take into consideration popular pedagogical

theories and instructional methodologies. In reviewing the kinds of instructional approaches popular with adult literacy instructors, as well as approaches that have been proven ineffective in adult educational contexts, one can approach the review of reading materials in an ESL textbook with a more informed view.

Burt, Peyton, and Van Duzer (2005) recognized that adult literacy instruction is different for native speakers than it is for English Language Learners. In their study of the literature, Burt et al. (2005) examined the necessary differences between adult ESL literacy instruction and Adult Basic Education (ABE) literacy instruction. They began by highlighting four essential components of reading instruction: vocabulary, alphabetics and word analysis, fluency, and comprehension. Burt et al. (2005) then illustrated the strategies used to teach these components to native English speakers and highlighted the ways in which these strategies may prove problematic. Many strategies that may prove successful for English L1 speakers, such as using contextual clues or using nonsense words to ensure students are reading and not recognizing words as sight words, do not work in ESL instruction. Burt et al. (2005) offered strategies for addressing these issues but emphasized that while some instructional strategies may work for both native English speakers and English L2 learners, the differences that arise must be taken into account when planning literacy instruction.

Burt, Peyton, and Schaetzel (2008) offered strategies for working with English Language Learners with low literacy skills. Similar to Burt et al. (2005)'s study, their examination highlighted four components of reading essential to developing literacy: alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Burt et al., 2008, p. 2). Burt et al. (2008) also offered specific strategies for working with adult English Language Learners, including developing motivation, activating prior knowledge and experiences, providing real-world context, teaching

specific strategies for reading passages, teaching word recognition and alphabetic literacy, building vocabulary, encouraging peer-to-peer discussion about texts, offering direct feedback, and involving family members (pp. 2-3).

Similarly, Tindall and Nisbet (2010) investigated reading instruction specific to adult English Language Learners in their article, "Exploring the Essential Components of Reading." Although there is a dearth of literature on this specific subject, Tindall and Nisbet hoped to facilitate instructors' understanding of the reading process by distinguishing five components essential to literacy instruction: phonological/phonemic awareness, word study/phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (2010, p. 2). In this approach, Tindall and Nisbet separated Burt et al.'s (2005) category of alphabetization into phonological/phonemic awareness and word study/phonics. By offering an understanding of the reading process, including instructional considerations and each component's significance to language learners, Tindall and Nisbet aimed to offer instructors a way of strategically teaching reading to adult ELLs.

All three papers point out that there is a distinct lack of literature regarding successful reading instruction for adult English Language Learners. Although the strategies offered in all three papers are useful, there is no quantitative data to suggest whether these would be successful. Although many experts agree that there needs to be more research into adult ELL literacy instruction, there does not seem to be an emergence of expertise seeking to quantify suggested strategies for instruction.

These findings relate to my study because the creation of educational materials must rely on proven techniques for instruction. In the face of a lack of quantifiable data as to the success of a particular strategy, the choice of instructional strategies used in the design of textbook

reading exercises must rely heavily on hypotheticals. The evaluation of any reading materials must take this lack of data into account.

The English Language Textbook

There is much significance given to the incorporation of authentic materials in English language textbooks. Chan (2013) investigated the use of situational authenticity in his study of popular textbooks used in English language instruction in Hong Kong. In his study, Chan (2013) explored "how the concept of authenticity is implemented in three localized textbook series via their choice of texts contextualized for local settings" (p. 306). Chan's investigation hoped to establish whether the "authenticity" of the texts reflect real-world use of English outside of the classroom.

The study examined three six-book series created specifically for Hong Kong's English language curriculum for grades 7-9 (Chan, 2013, p. 306). The first phase of the data collected qualitative data looking at the overall design and principle of the tasks in terms of their nature, structure, and arrangement within the overall units, as well as student perspectives on how these tasks were locally contextualized (Chan, 2013, p. 306). The second phase involved a quantitfication (counting) and categorization of tasks and texts in each of the series (Chan, 2013, p. 306). Findings proved that not only are the texts, both written and spoken, inauthentic, but that "a complete correspondence between the textbook design and local sociolinguistic environment is both unrealistic and inappropriate at school" (Chan, 2013, p. 315). The creation of artificial "authentic" scenarios made for strange tasks in the classroom.

Similarly, Clavel-Arriotia and Fuster-Márquez (2014) investigated the authenticity of real texts in advanced English language textbooks. Considering a total of 60 texts taken from six adult B2 and C1 English textbooks used world-wide, Clavel-Arriotia and Fuster-Márquez (2014)

examined the authenticity of the texts in relation to authenticity and the claim that the separation of a text from the original context diminishes authenticity, a fact which is further enhanced by the adaptation or editing of materials for the textbook. Using both quantitative and qualitative measures, Clavel-Arriotia and Fuster-Márquez (2014) analyzed texts based on four parameters: text typology, type/degree of adaptation, the variety of English represented, and acknowledgement (p. 127). The results of the data proved that the texts in recently published textbooks are not as authentic as claimed, by virtue of lack of typology variety, lack of English variety, alterations and substitution that affect the meaning and title of the texts, and insufficient acknowledgment.

Chan (2013) and Clavel-Arriotia and Fuster-Márquez (2014) offer compelling arguments regarding the claim of authenticity in English language textbooks. However, neither offer data regarding the efficacy of the textbooks being used as they are. Although they have determined that the materials being used in the textbooks are not "authentic" as claimed, they do not establish whether this lack of authenticity affects comprehension.

These studies relate to my project in that the use of authentic texts is often touted as a critical component of language instruction and textbook evaluation. The findings of Chan (2013) and Clavel-Arriotia and Fuster-Márquez (2014) would seem to indicate that goal may not be attainable, and therefore there may need to be other considerations made when evaluating the reading materials in low-level adult English language textbooks.

SUMMARY

The findings in the literature summarized herein emphasize the need for expertise in the creation of educational materials specifically for adult English language learners. There is a distinct dearth of literature relating to literacy instruction for adult ELLs. That said, this

literature offers some educational suggestions for meeting the needs of adult ELLs and determining the authenticity of the texts to be included in materials.

CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

This project contains three parts: 1) an evaluation of two textbooks, 2) a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the materials, and 3) proposals for some improvements to the materials. Part one deals with the evaluation of two Level 1 integrated skills textbooks released by major publishers using the frameworks as described by Andrew Littlejohn (2000, 2011). In this section, the two textbooks will be evaluated separately and through the lenses of adult learner theory and critical literacy and will focus specifically on the reading sections of the books. Five reading lessons based on similar themes from each book will evaluated, utilizing an evaluative framework adapted from Littlejohn (2000, 2011). Part two is a discussion and analysis of the two textbooks in relation to each other and to the major literature on the subject. This section will detail the similar and contrasting elements of the reading sections in both textbooks and will seek to analyze these sections in reference to the frameworks developed by Littlejohn (2000, 2011). It will also highlight the strengths in each textbook and identify gaps in the materials. Part three will offer suggestions for effective materials creation based on the findings in the previous sections.

Development of the Project

I was extremely fortunate to have grown up the product of two avid readers. Every night, one of my parents would read a book or two to me before I went to sleep. Weekend mornings were often spent in silence in the front room, the only sound the gentle rustling of turning pages. Growing up, my best friends were named Nancy Drew, Meg Murray, and Frodo Baggins. My life has been enriched by the written word, a passion I have always wanted to share with others in some way. With a mother who immigrated to the United States from Germany, I have also

always had an affinity with ELLs. Her experiences with English gave me a particular appreciation for the intricacies of the language that are sometimes difficult to detect without an outsider's ear. When my mother moved to America, she struggled with American vernacular and took refuge in books. Her experiences have shaped my connection to the language, and to people learning to use it.

In my desire to share my love of reading, I have come to understand just how important the written word truly is to everyday life. Reading is not only a pleasurable activity; it is a necessary exercise in everyday live. From street signs to menus to legal documents to email to entertainment, written language is ubiquitous. Those who are unable to read are at a distinct societal disadvantage; this disadvantage is amplified for those who are not native speakers of that written language. Thus, my motive to investigate teaching reading to adult ELLs was born of a desire to help those who do not read English level the playing field. However, it is rare that people use their language skills one at a time. Natural language use involves the integration of multiple skills at once, and therefore my curiosity at teaching reading as an integrated skill lead me to investigate a specific kind of ESL textbook: integrated skills.

In order to develop this project, I first conducted extensive research on popular publishers of ESL textbooks, including a thorough examination of their catalogues. Specifically, I looked into the sections of their catalogs devoted to Adult integrated skills instruction. After comparing and contrasting many different textbooks, I procured the teacher's editions of two similar textbooks from two different major publishers. Next, I examined the evaluative frameworks offered by Andrew Littlejohn in preparation for the assessment of these texts.

The next step in the completion of this project involved an exploration of the literature on teaching reading to adult ELLs. My research has found a convergence of questions about the

appropriateness of what is considered the right materials to include in textbooks and a lack of expertise on effective adult ELL literacy education. Although there is extensive literature on teaching reading, and even on teaching reading to adults, there is a distinct dearth of literature on teaching reading to the specific audience of adult English Language Leaners. This led to the next step in the process, a critical evaluation of the two textbooks, including suggestions for improved materials creation based on a consolidation of the literature on the subject. The hope is that this project will shed some light on the production of reading materials in integrated skills textbooks and offer some concrete solutions for teaching adult ELL literacy.

The Project

Utilizing the framework for materials analysis developed by Littlejohn (2011), and informed by his *Futures Curriculum* (2000), this project seeks to evaluate the reading materials in two textbooks printed by popular publishers of TESOL materials. Using a combination of these frameworks, five units from each book will be analyzed and evaluated. For the sake of comparison, this project will examine correlating units from units based on similar themes.

The Framework

Littlejohn's (2011) framework consists of two sections, the first focusing on the physical aspects of the materials, and the second focusing on the design of the materials, or the "thinking underlying the materials" (p. 183). Although this project will touch on physical aspects of both textbooks and the materials therein, the focus for the purpose of this project will be on the second aspect. Littlejohn's (2011) framework also breaks down three levels of analysis: the objective description, a subjective analysis, and a subjective inference (p. 185). The objective description refers to explicit information about the materials. A subjective analysis involves the analysis of

what students and teachers are being asked to do with the materials. Finally, the subjective inference involves making conclusions about the principals behind the creation of the materials.

Littlejohn's *Futures Curriculum* (2000) focuses on six important principles: coherence, significant content, decision-making in the classroom, use of students' intelligence, cultural understanding, and critical language awareness (p. 5). Coherence refers to the use of themes or topics as a way of connecting lessons to each other in order to give students a greater understanding of the subject. Significant content is content that is worth knowing and that is treated appropriately and not trivialized. Decision-making in the classroom refers to having students shaping the lesson themselves by making decisions about the lesson. Use of students' intelligence means having students think about the subject by using such skills as hypothesizing and negotiating, rather than simple retrieval and repetition of the information being presented. Cultural understanding refers to exercises which promote cultural awareness and understanding by encouraging students to take viewpoints under than their own and to learn about other cultures. Finally, critical language awareness means encouraging students to think critically about the language in use and to contemplate why the language is being used in that particular way. This project will focus on these principals as a way to inform the third level of Littlejohn's (2011) framework, the subjective inference.

In order to combine both of Littlejohn's works into one coherent tool for use in the evaluation of the reading materials in the textbooks, I have created a checklist of questions to be filled out for each unit (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Framework for Evaluating Reading Materials

{UNIT TITLE}	
Activity Description	
Objective Description	
Subjective Analysis	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	
Significant Content	
Decision-Making in the Classroom	
Use of Students' Intelligence	
Cultural Understanding	
Critical Language Awareness	

Book A is Level 1 in a six-level series of integrated skills ESL textbooks designed for adults and meant to "empower[] students to achieve their academic and career goals." It features full color illustrations and photos. The design of the book is rigidly structured. It is broken up into ten units (plus a "welcome" unit), each one based on a particular theme such as personal information, shopping, and free time. Each Unit is broken up into Lessons A through F. In each Unit, Lesson D is a reading lesson.

Each reading lesson involves four components. First, students complete a pre-reading activity in which they look at a picture related to the reading and discuss and answer questions

about the material. Second, they complete a reading activity accompanied by an audio track. Third, they complete a post-reading activity that involves reading and answering yes/no questions by circling the correct response, writing out the corrected versions of the false sentences, and then reading questions and filling in answers that can be pulled directly from the reading. Fourth, they complete a "picture dictionary" task that involves looking at a picture, filling in corresponding vocabulary items from a list, listening to an audio track of those vocabulary items and then repeating them, and then discussing the activity with a partner utilizing the vocabulary.

Similar to Book A, Book B is also Level 1 in a six-level series of integrated skills ESL textbooks designed for adults, and meant to "help students persist in their English studies," as well as "make a successful transition into academic programs. It also features full color illustrations and photos. It comprises twelve units (as well as a "welcome" unit). Unit 1 features eight lessons, and Units 2-12 are made up of nine lessons. Unit goals tend to be more expansive than Book A, and each unit comprises more variation in types of activities. The structure of Book B is less rigid than Book A, with the reading lesson being a different lesson in each unit. For instance, the reading lesson in Unit 1 is Lesson 6, while the reading lesson in Unit 6 is Lesson 4.

Each reading lesson consists of three components: a pre-reading activity titled "Before You Read," the reading activity entitled "Read," and a post-reading activity entitled "Check Your Understanding." The requirements of each of these activities differs depending on the unit, as demonstrated in the evaluations below.

Theme 1: Personal Information

Book A – Unit 1 – Personal Information	
Activity Description	Read a paragraph about a new student and recognize information found on an ID card
Objective Description	
The pre-reading exercise features a short registration form with a fictional student's name, phone number, and address, as well as an illustration of a woman's headshot. The reading activity looks like a piece of torn paper and features very short, concise sentences about the student's personal information. The picture dictionary task features a fake student ID for another fictional student, including a small real photo of the student; the section for the partner discussion also features a blank, illustrated ID and some simple example dialogue. There is an additional cultural note regarding addresses, and one about addressing men and women with the correct title. Nothing in the lesson is a genuine reproduction of a real document.	
Subjective Analysis	
Students are first asked to read the registration form and discuss two questions about information on the form. Next, they read and listen to a short paragraph about a fictional student. Next, they read and answer questions regarding the paragraph. Finally, in the picture dictionary task, they are asked to read the information on a student ID, fill in the appropriate corresponding vocabulary next to the various items on the ID, listen to and repeat the vocabulary words, and then talk to a partner using the featured vocabulary. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, engage students in discussion about the materials, and facilitate the partner discussion.	

Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The entire unit is built around the topic of personal information. Other activities include recognizing names and exchanging phone numbers. Although the two reading activities fit into the overall topic of the unit, they are somewhat dissimilar in that one involves the exchange of personal information, and one involves vocabulary associated with personal identification cards.
Significant Content	The content of the reading activities is significant in as much as it focuses on personal information, such as phone numbers and addresses, which are items of information that are likely to be encountered often. The picture dictionary task is particularly significant because it focuses on the items on an id, which is important information to have. However, the id image does not look representative of a typical student id.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities in this unit are very structured and leave no room for students to make decisions regarding the lesson. Even the activity requiring discussion with a partner is scripted.
Use of Students' Intelligence	The reading tasks to do not require much significant thought. Activities involve listening to and reading information and then simply repeating the information or retrieving answers to questions directly from that content. Even the discussion

	activity requires scripted questions asking for very simple personal information that students do not need to think hard about.
Cultural Understanding	The reading activities do not involve much cultural discussion. However, it does include a cultural note to help students understand the proper way of addressing men and married or unmarried women.
Critical Language Awareness	There is no sense of Critical Language Awareness in these reading activities. The activities are quite structured and do not involve any discussion or room for speculation about why the featured items of language are used the way they are.

Book B – Unit 1 – Getting to Know You	
Activity Description	Read about immigrants in the U.S.
Objective Description	
The pre-reading activity has three photographs of people, accompanied by an audio track and short captions about the people in each photo. It also includes a discussion topic about people being happy or unhappy to be in the U.S., illustrated by smiley and sad faces. The reading activity features a short article about immigrants in the United States, accompanied by a pie chart, featuring information from the U.S. Census Bureau.	
Subjective Analysis	
In the pre-reading activity, students look at three photographs of people and listen and read along with an audio track describing why the people in each photograph are in the United States. Students then pair up to discuss why they are in the U.S. Then, they discuss as a class why some people are not happy to be in the U.S. Next, for the reading activity, they read and listen to a short article about immigrants in the United States. Then, for the post-reading activity, they answer true or false questions about the article by circling the appropriate response. Finally, the class takes a survey together to construct a pie chart similar to the one in the article they just read. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, and facilitate discussion between partners and the entire classroom.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The unit is themed around making personal introductions, and includes expansive goals such as reading a world map, using titles, spelling first and last names, and talking about

	classmates and school. Much of the unit focuses on where people are from. Other activities in the unit include listening to conversations about other students and where they are from and identifying the correct titles (miss, mr.) for various individuals. The reading activities achieve coherence with the rest of the unit in that they both focus on where people are originally from. They also achieve coherence with each other in that the theme of both activities is immigrants in the US and their reasons for moving.
Significant Content	The content of the reading activities is significant because it discusses the experiences of people who students may be able to relate to. Furthermore, it is treated appropriately because it discusses people from different ethnic backgrounds, and it uses real data from the U.S. Census Bureau.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities in this unit are very structured, but offer multiple opportunities for students to engage in un-scripted conversation, thereby allowing them to shape the lesson in the sense that they have some control of how the overall discussion develops in the classroom.
Use of Students' Intelligence	The reading activities make use of the students' intelligence by engaging them in conversations about their own experiences moving to American and encouraging them to think critically about other people's experiences. For

	instance, they are offered the opportunity to hypothesize about why some people may be unhappy in the U.S.
Cultural Understanding	The reading activities promote cultural understanding by presenting the stories of people who immigrated to the U.S. for different reasons and by engaging students in discussions regarding the reasons people may move to the U.S. and why they may or may not be happy to be in the U.S. Further, the lesson promotes cultural understanding by offering students the opportunity to discuss with each other their own reasons for being in the U.S., allowing them to learn about their fellow classmates' own backgrounds.
Critical Language Awareness	Critical Language Awareness is not an element of the reading activities. Students are not given the opportunity in these activities to think about why the language is used the way it is in these particular contexts.

Theme 2: School

Book A – Unit 2 – At School	
Activity Description	Read an announcement about the classroom and learn vocabulary about common classroom objects
Objective Description	
The pre-reading exercise is an illustration of someone in a classroom posting an announcement on a chalkboard. The reading activity is the announcement, written in bullet-points. The picture dictionary task is a set of illustrations of nine common classroom objects. There are no real photographs in the lesson.	
Subjective Analysis	
Students first look at the illustration and discuss two questions about what is going on in the picture. Next, they read and listen to the classroom announcement. Then, they read and answer questions regarding the paragraph. Finally, they caption each classroom object in the picture dictionary with the corresponding vocabulary items, listen to and repeat the vocabulary, and then converse with a partner about the classroom objects. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, engage students in discussion about the materials, and facilitate the partner discussion.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The unifying theme of the unit is school. Other activities in the unit include listening to conversations about classroom objects and writing about the locations of classroom items. The two reading activities fit into the overall unit topic of

	school and classroom objects. They also achieve a sense of coherence with each other, as they are both about the topic of classroom objects as well.
Significant Content	The reading activities achieve significance in that they both revolve around vocabulary one is likely to encounter often in the classroom and is therefore important to learn, especially as a part of a series meant to prepare adult ELLs for further education.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities are structured and leave no room for student-led decision-making, including the discussion activity which involves working with a script.
Use of Students' Intelligence	The reading tasks do not utilize the students' intelligence. Activities involve only the retrieval and repetition of information, and does not offer the students an opportunity to hypothesize or negotiate meaning. Even the discussion task works from a script, so that students only have to fill in the appropriate vocabulary items in their conversations.
Cultural Understanding	There is no culturally relevant subject matter in the activities, except in as much as it relates to the American classroom. However, it does not offer any comparison to any other classroom and therefore could be considered culturally generic.

Critical Language Awareness	The reading activities offer no sense of Critical Language Awareness in these reading activities. They are very structured and give no opportunity for students to discuss or contemplate the use of the language in these contexts.

Book B – Unit 3 – Pens, Paper, Pencils	
Activity Description	Read about good study habits
Objective Description	
The pre-reading activity features several full-color illustrations pertaining to study habits. The reading activity looks like a torn-off excerpt from an advice column titled "Ask the Professor," including a small photograph of the "Professor."	
Subjective Analysis	
In the pre-reading, students discuss their study habits as a class. Next, they work in pairs to match a set of sentences about study habits to corresponding illustrations. For the reading activity, students read and listen to an advice column about good study habits. Then, they read and correct sentences about the column, and then determine the main idea of the column. Finally, as a group activity, students write down a skill they want to practice and then network with their classmates to form a group based on the skills they want to practice and discuss their study goals. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play the audio track for the students, and facilitate discussion and networking between partners, small groups, and the entire classroom.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The theme of the unit is school, and involves goals like following classroom instructions, using numbers 10-100, and talking about things in the classroom and people and places at school. Other activities in the unit include identifying and discussing common classroom items, listening to classroom

	instructions, and identifying numbers. The reading activities achieve a sense of coherence with the rest of the unit in that they follow the theme of school. They also achieve a sense of coherence with each other in that they both discuss good study habits.
Significant Content	The content of the reading activities is significant because it offers advice on study habits that have the potential to be helpful to students in school. This is especially significant because the series is meant to prepare students for further education.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities in this unit are very structured and offer little opportunity for decision-making by students. There is one component to the lesson that asks students to consider and discuss their own study goals, but that activity also involves very specific instructions.
Use of Students' Intelligence	Most of these activities do not utilize students' intelligence because they are rigidly structured and primarily require the retrieval and repetition of information presented in the written and audio formats. However, the discussion activity encourages students to think critically about their own goals for studying and skills development, and form groups based on similar goals, which does offer more of an opportunity for critical thinking than the other activities.

Cultural Understanding	The reading activities in this unit rely on generic information and contexts and therefore does not promote any cultural discussion or understanding.
Critical Language Awareness	There is no opportunity for Critical Language Awareness in the reading activities in this unit. Students are not given the opportunity to discuss or contemplate the use of language in these contexts.

Theme 3: Relationships

Book A – Unit 3 – Friends and Family	
Activity Description	Read a paragraph about a birthday party and learn vocabulary about family relationships
Objective Description	
The pre-reading activity features a cartoon illustration of a picture of a birthday party for a man named Juan; the picture is meant to look like it is in a photo album, and has the title "Photo Album" written across the top. The reading activity is a paragraph written in the first-person captioning the photo, and features some illustration on the side reminiscent of an invitation. The picture dictionary task features a family tree with illustrations of the fictional family of a character named Tony, including names and relationships. No real photographs are used. There is an additional note on vernacular terms for family members.	
Subjective Analysis	
Students first look at the "photo" of Juan's birthday party and discuss what is happening in the photo. Next, they read and listen to a first-person narrative about Juan's party. Next, they read and answer questions about the narrative. Finally, they look at the illustrated family tree in the picture dictionary task and fill in the correct vocabulary, listen to and repeat the vocabulary words, and then discuss Tony's family with a partner. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, engage students in discussion about the materials, and facilitate the partner discussion.	

Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The unit is based on the expansive topic of friends and family. It includes activities such as identifying live-in family members and writing about everyday activities. The sense of coherence is decreased in this unit because although the theme is friends and family, most of the activities focus on everyday activities. The reading activities, however, do achieve a sense of coherence with the overall theme of the unit, in that they discuss family members at a birthday party and filling out a family tree.
Significant Content	The first activity achieves significance only in the sense that it discusses family members. However, it does trivialize the subject a bit by discussing the content in terms of a fictional birthday party, which is not a subject likely to come up in conversation with adult learners. The picture dictionary task, however, is significant because it covers common vocabulary related to family, words that are likely to be used in personal conversation.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities are very structured and leave no room for decision making by the students, including the discussion activity which involves working with scripted conversation about the presented vocabulary.

Use of Students' Intelligence	These activities to not utilize students' intelligence. Students recall and retrieve information presented in the reading and audio materials and engage in scripted conversations about the listed vocabulary items. Students are given no opportunity for hypothesizing or negotiating meaning.
Cultural Understanding	The only nod to cultural diversity in this activity is in the fact that several of the characters mentioned have ethnically diverse names, such as Juan, Nancy, and Yoko, and illustrated characters also appear to reflect ethnic diversity. Otherwise, there is no discussion of cultural practices or understanding; rather the material remains fairly generic.
Critical Language Awareness	There is no sense of Critical Language Awareness in these reading activities. The structured nature of the activities offers no room for speculation about the use of language.

Book B – Unit 4 – Family Ties	
Activity Description	Read about blended families
Objective Description	
The pre-reading activity first features two pie charts about marriage and divorce from the U.S. Census Bureau. It also includes six computer-generated photos of a blended family. The reading activity looks like a torn-out article about an American family, including a computer generated-photo in the style of the pictures in the pre-reading activity.	
Subjective Analysis	
For the pre-reading activity, students as a class look at the pie charts and discuss marriage and divorce in their own countries. They then look at the photos and complete the captions underneath each picture using a list of vocabulary. For the reading activity, students read and listen to an article about the family featured in the photos in the pre-reading activity. Next, they work in pairs to complete an activity using information from the article, and then determine the main idea of the article. Finally, they work in pairs to discuss blended families. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, and facilitate pairwork and classroom discussion.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The theme of the unit is family, which includes goals such as describing people, talking and writing about months and dates, and discussing birthdays and ages. Other activities in the unit include talking about people on a family tree and their relationships to each other, discussing family members, describing people's physical attributes, and identifying dates.

	The reading activities achieve coherence with the unit theme in that they are both about family. They also achieve coherence with each other because they are both under the theme of blended families.
Significant Content	The content of the reading activities achieves some significance in that it covers a cultural topic that is a common occurrence in American culture – blended families. It also includes vocabulary that students are likely to use outside of the classroom in personal conversations. Furthermore, it includes data pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau, which indicates that it is treating the material appropriately rather than relying solely on fictional stories.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities in this unit follow very specific structure. However, there is a little bit of flexibility in the form of open-ended classroom discussions, which allows the students to shape the conversation.
Use of Students' Intelligence	For the most part, the activities rely on the recollection and repetition of information presented in the audio and written pieces in the lesson. However, students have the opportunity to utilize their intelligence in discussions about their own experiences with their families and common practices in their own home countries.

Cultural Understanding	The reading activities promote cultural understanding by encouraging classroom discussion about common practices in students' countries, allowing them to talk about their own experiences and learn from each other's knowledge of their own cultural practices.
Critical Language Awareness	There is no sense of Critical Language Awareness in the reading activities in this unit, which offer no opportunity for students to consider the use of language in these particular contexts.

Theme 4: Health and Wellness

Book A – Unit 4 - Health	
Activity Description	Read about health problems and learn vocabulary about the body
Objective Description	
The pre-reading exercise is a cartoon illustration of a sick family in a doctor's office. The reading activity is a short paragraph about a sick family. The picture dictionary task is an illustration of a cartoon of a man who is running and a woman who is stretching, featuring the various parts of the body. There is an additional illustration next to the conversation activity featuring two people, one of whom is reading a book and the other of whom has a toothache. There are no photographs used.	
Subjective Analysis	
First, students look at and discuss the illustration of a sick family in a doctor's office and discuss the scene. Next, they listen to and read a short paragraph about the family in the photo and their various ailments and then read and answer questions about the paragraph. Next, they look at the illustrations in the picture dictionary task and label the different parts of the body with the relevant vocabulary words and then listen to and repeat the vocabulary. Finally, using the second cartoon as a guide, they talk with a partner about various body parts that hurt. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, engage students in discussion about the materials, and facilitate the partner conversations.	

Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The overall theme of the unit is health, and focuses on common ailments. Other activities in the unit include listening to conversations about people not feeling well and having conversations with a partner about how to treat common health problems. The first reading assignment achieves coherence with the overall unit in that it involves a trip to the doctor's office and a narrative about a family's health problems. However, the picture dictionary task focuses on vocabulary about parts of the body and therefore only achieves tangential coherence to the other activity and the overall unit.
Significant Content	The content of these reading activities is significant in that it addresses vocabulary about illness and parts of the body, which is likely to be helpful to students outside of the classroom, especially if they or a family member ever need to go to the doctor.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	These reading activities are rigidly structured and offer no opportunity for students to make decisions in the classroom. This includes the discussion activity, which utilizes a structured script for students to use to discuss health problems, involving the vocabulary items covered in the lesson.

Use of Students' Intelligence	The reading tasks to do not require much significant thought. Activities involve the retrieval and recollection of written and audio information and give students no opportunity to plan, evaluate, negotiate, or hypothesize. The discussion activity utilizes a structured script as a frame for students' conversations.
Cultural Understanding	These activities offer no cultural discussion whatsoever, and the material covered comes across as generic.
Critical Language Awareness	These activities are very structured and do not encourage Critical Language Awareness. There is no room for discussion or contemplation about the language and the way it is used.

Book B – Unit 11 – Health Matters	
Activity Description	Read about walking for your health
Objective Description	
The pre-reading activity consists of six illustrations pertaining to walking and health. The reading activity is an article about walking, including a photograph of two people walking together.	
Subjective Analysis	
During the pre-reading activity, students discuss walking as a class. They then look at the illustrations and read the captions, and use those captions to complete the sentence "When you walk a lot,_____." For the reading activity, they read and listen to an article about the health benefits of walking. To check their understanding, they answer a multiple-choice question about the main idea of the article and then answer true or false questions about the article. Finally, students make a list of goals related to walking more, then pair up and discuss their goals. They are also instructed to continue to check in with their partner about their goals over the course of the subsequent weeks. The instructor's role in this lesson is to give instructions, introduce activities, play the audio track for the students, and facilitate discussion between partners and the entire classroom.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The theme of the unit is health, which includes such goals as identifying parts of the body, discussing health issues, following instructions during a medical exam, and talking about the past. Other activities in the unit include identifying parts of the body in a picture, listening and answering

	questions about children's health problems and their reasons for being absent from school, and practicing making a doctor's appointment. The reading activities achieve coherence with the overall unit in that they are about improving health. They also achieve coherence with each other because they are both about walking as a way of improving one's health.
Significant Content	The content in the reading activities is significant in that it addresses some content related to health, a common topic outside of the classroom, and offers some advice for improving one's health. Students, especially adults, are likely to consider their own health an important topic.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities in this unit are very structured and offer little opportunity for students to make decisions about the lesson.
Use of Students' Intelligence	The structured nature of the reading activities does not leave much room for the use of students' intelligence, relying instead on the recollection and repetition of information presented in the materials. There is, however, one discussion activity that asks students to find a partner and discuss their own fitness goals and then check in periodically regarding the goals. This encourages students to think critically about their

	own health and wellness, rather than just read about other people's experiences.
Cultural Understanding	The reading activities are centered on generic materials and therefore do not offer the opportunity to discuss or promote cultural understanding.
Critical Language Awareness	There is no opportunity for Critical Language Awareness in these reading activities. Students are not encouraged to think about why language is used the way it is in these contexts.

Theme 5: Time

Book A – Unit 6 - Time	
Activity Description	Read an announcement about a new employee and learn vocabulary about daily activities
Objective Description	
The pre-reading exercise has a cartoon corkboard with an illustration of a fictional person named Bob. The reading exercise looks like a piece of notebook paper pinned to the board and features a short announcement about the new employee, Bob. The picture dictionary activity has nine illustrations of various daily activities. There are no real photographs or reproductions of real documents.	
Subjective Analysis	
First, students look at the picture of Bob and discuss his uniform and new job. Next, they read and listen to a short announcement about Bob, the new employee, and then read and answer questions about the announcement. Next, they caption illustrations in the picture dictionary task with corresponding vocabulary items and then listen to and repeat the vocabulary. Finally, they discuss their daily activities with a partner using the featured vocabulary. The instructor's role is to give instructions, introduce activities, play audio tracks for the students, engage students in discussion about the materials, and facilitate the partner discussion.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The theme of the entire unit is time, and focuses on items relating to daily schedules. Other activities include telling time with a partner and listening to a narrative about a

	family's daily schedule. The reading activities achieve coherence with the rest of the unit and each other in that the first one focuses on the daily schedule of one man, including items on time, and the second activity focuses on vocabulary about daily activities.
Significant Content	The content of the activities is significant only in that it covers vocabulary about activities students are likely to perform in everyday life. However, the initial activity does not achieve a very high level of significance in that it is an announcement about a new employee at a fictional company, a form of writing students will not necessarily encounter often.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The structured nature of these reading activities leaves no room for decision making by the students. The discussion activity is not strictly scripted, but involves a structure and requires use of the vocabulary presented in the lesson.
Use of Students' Intelligence	These reading tasks to not require significant thought and rather rely on the recollection and repetition of the information presented in the audio and written content. There is no opportunity for students to negotiate meaning, evaluate, hypothesize, or plan.

Cultural Understanding	The activities involve generic content and do not discuss culture at all and therefore does not promote any sense of cultural awareness or understanding.
Critical Language Awareness	These activities do not involve Critical Language Awareness at all. The lesson is entirely structured and offers no opportunity for students to think about the use of language in these contexts.

Book B – Unit 7 – Day After Day	
Activity Description	Read about free time in the U.S.
Objective Description	
There is no illustration or photo to accompany the pre-reading activity in this lesson. The reading activity is a short illustrated article about common activities Americans do in their free time, which culls data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The post-reading activity also features four bar graphs related to how Americans spend their free time.	
Subjective Analysis	
The pre-reading activity involves students pairing up and discussing their free time. For the reading activity, students read and listen to a short article called "Time Out" about how Americans spend their free time. Next, students answer true or false questions about the article and then discuss in pairs whether those statements are true in their own countries. Next, they look at four bar graphs and fill in the answers to questions based on the data in the graphs. Finally, as a class, students take a survey about how much free time they have and create a bar graph for the entire class. The instructor's role for this lesson is to give instructions, introduce activities, play the audio track for the students, and facilitate discussion between partners and collaboration on the completion of the survey by the entire classroom.	
Subjective Inference	
Coherence	The entire unit is themed around time and daily activities, and includes goals such as discussing times of day, completing a time sheet, and talking about daily and weekend activities. Other activities in the unit include identifying daily activities

	in a series of pictures, reading and interpreting a personal schedule, and identifying days of the week on a calendar. The reading activities achieve coherence with the rest of the unit in that they are both about daily activities. They also achieve coherence with each other because they both revolve around free time in the United States.
Significant Content	The content of these reading activities is significant because it discusses daily activities students are likely to perform or encounter outside of the classroom. Furthermore, it is treated appropriately because it cites data pulled from the U.S. Department of Labor rather than relying solely on fictional accounts of strangers, which gives it a sense of relevance to the world and students' lives outside of the classroom.
Decision-Making in the Classroom	The reading activities are very structured in this unit and offer little opportunity for students to make decisions in the classroom. Even the discussion activities, although they are not scripted, involve a structure that leaves little room for decision-making or flexibility.
Use of Students' Intelligence	The reading activities in this unit are rigidly structured and make little use of students' intelligence. The only opportunity students are given to utilize their own knowledge is when they are asked to discuss their free time, which does not

	necessarily promote critical thinking, hypothesizing, or negotiation of meaning.
Cultural Understanding	The only discussion of culture in the reading activities in this unit is about common activities performed by Americans. There is no real opportunity for students to discuss cultural differences and no real promotion of cultural understanding otherwise.
Critical Language Awareness	There is no element of Critical Language Awareness in these reading activities, offering no opportunity for students to consider the way language is used in these contexts.

Discussion

The reading activities in both Book A and Book B feature several strengths that should be considered when creating materials for ESL instruction. First, all of the materials are visually compelling. They feature full-color illustrations and photos, which not only provide some frame of reference to the material at hand, but also break up what could be an otherwise overwhelming amount of written text. Book B in particular is very strong in this area, featuring a mixture of illustration and photographs featuring real people of multiple ethnicities, whereas the reading materials in Book A rely solely on illustrations. The photographs in Book B give the materials a much stronger sense of authenticity. Second, both books have a strong sense of coherence. In nearly all of the units evaluated herein, the reading activities fit in to the theme established throughout the unit, as well as throughout the reading lesson itself. Finally, the use of integrated skills in both Book A and Book B is present throughout each of the reading lessons examined.

The activities do not merely focus on reading skills. Rather, they also offer students an opportunity to strengthen their listening skills by including an audio track with each of the lessons and by having the students engage in conversation. Additionally, students are given many opportunities for oral output; although some of this is scripted, this still gives students the chance to practice their speaking skills. Finally, students are also given the opportunity to do some small writing exercises in a few of the units. These mostly consisted of copying information from the reading materials available, but it does still give the students the opportunity to practice writing, an especially important skill to practice for those students whose L1 uses a different alphabet.

Both books also have some areas lacking in the principles of adult learner theory and critical literacy which are important to contemplate in the creation of ESL instructional materials. Most notably, there is no sense of critical language awareness in any of the reading lessons evaluated herein. Although these books are designed for students at a very low level of proficiency, effective andragogy requires materials to engage students in their own learning (Knowles, 1973, 1977). One way to do so is by encouraging students to think critically about why language is being used the way it is. This is also a major component of critical literacy, which encourages critical reading to promote deeper understanding (Lohrey, 1998, p. 8). Another way to engage students in their own learning is by engaging them in decision-making in the classroom. This is also an important tenet of andragogy that is lacking from the reading activities in both books. Although Book B offers a few opportunities for open-ended discussion, for the most part the reading activities in both Books A and B are far too structured to encourage any sort of decision-making on the students' parts. There is no real room for "participative decision-making" (Knowles, 1977, p. 211) where such rigid structure exists. Furthermore, there

is room for improvement in terms of cultural understanding in the reading activities. Although Book B utilizes this in some units, there are still other units that show no use of cultural awareness or understanding in the reading activities; what's more, Book A encourages no cultural understanding in any of the reading activities examined herein. Critical literacy encourages reading as a way of deepening one's understanding of the world (Lohrey, 1998); reading activities designed for adult learners should encourage and promote the use of written works to explore and understand the world through other people's perspectives. Finally, both books lack in the use of students' intelligence in the reading activities. Using students' intelligence is an extremely important component of both andragogy and critical literacy because it encourages student-centered learning and critical thinking about the material being taught. The structured nature of the activities in both Book A and Book B results in a reliance on retrieving, recollecting, and repeating information. There is very little if any opportunity for students to explore the materials for deeper understanding through the use of hypothesis, negotiation, planning, or evaluation (Littlejohn, 2000, p. 6).

One important component of Littlejohn's *Futures Curriculum* is the idea of significant content, or content that is worth knowing (2000, p. 6). One way to increase significance is by use of real materials that are relevant to the students' lives and interests. One area in which significance may be improved is in the Book A Unit 1 picture dictionary task, which asks students to look at an illustrated, fictional student identification card. This task could be made more relevant and therefore more significant by utilizing a representation or a real state-issued ID or driver's license, or even a passport. The same information presented in the faux student ID (name, address, and signature) is found in any real form of identification. This would be an easy improvement to make, as an online search could bring up countless examples of government-

issued identification. Real identification is likely to be much more relevant to the lives of adult ESL students than fake student IDs. Increasing the relevance of the supplemental material in this lesson would thereby increase the significance of the content. Similar strategies may be employed with other materials to increase significance and improve the learning environment.

Another important component of Littlejohn's *Futures Curriculum* is the use of decision-making by students in the classroom (2000, p. 6). This is also a very important component of andragogy because it encourages students to take control of their own learning (Knowles, 1977, p. 211). This is a component of the *Futures Curriculum* that is relatively easy to include in learning. One example of an activity that could be modified to include an element of decision making is at the end of Book B Unit 1. Students are asked to take a survey of the class by asking "Are you happy to be here?" Students are given three options (yes, no, and sometimes), and then are instructed to make a pie chart of the answers. Rather than completing this survey, the instructor could instead ask the students to come up with their own survey questions related to living in the United States. Working together as a class, students would narrow down a short list of questions that they come up with themselves, and then break up into pairs or small groups and interview each other using their questions. Students would take notes on each other's answers, and then report back to the class on some of the interesting responses they receive. This modification integrates all four skills by making use primarily of speaking and listening skills, but also writing and reading in terms of note taking. Furthermore, this activity utilizes several of Littlejohn's *Futures Curriculum* components aside from decision-making. First, it maintains a sense of coherence with the rest of the unit because it is still on the topic of living in the United States. Additionally, it features significant content, use of students' intelligence, and cultural understanding by utilizing material relevant to the lives of the students that asks them to use their

own expertise to share their experiences and learn from each other's experiences as well. By making this slight modification to the exercise in this reading activity, students are given the opportunity to shape the lesson their own way and practice their skills in a meaningful way. Modifications like this are easy to make in other contexts in order to enhance the learning experience and the effectiveness of the instructional materials.

Everyone involved in the process of instruction for adult ELLs, including the creators and publishers of materials as well as the instructors themselves, have an implicit responsibility to create a learning environment that is as conducive to language acquisition as possible. One way to do so is to bear in mind the components of the evaluation conducted herein while planning a lesson or preparing educational materials for use in the classroom. By remaining mindful of students' intelligence and ability to think critically, instructors and publishers can create an educational experience that effective and engaging for their adult students.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The non-native English speaking population of the United States continues to grow exponentially year by year (Ryan, 2013, p. 7). As this demographic expands, the need for effective educational materials becomes increasingly apparent. This is especially true in regards to the adult ELL population, for whom effective educational strategies require attention to specific theories such as the critical period hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) and andragogy (Knowles, 1973). Teaching English through integrated skills textbooks is a popular and efficient method of language instruction, and focus on reading as an integrated skill is an important component of English language education. Literacy is important not only to one's educational career, but also to one's ability to succeed and even flourish outside of the classroom. Reading is a skill used in everyday life, from the workplace to home, from the grocery store to church to the doctor's office, and everywhere in between. In order to help adult ELLs thrive outside of the English language classroom, special attention must be given to the materials used to teach reading as an integrated skill.

In order to provide insight into the preparation of effective materials for integrated skills instruction, and specifically for reading as an integrated skill, this project delved in detail into the reading sections of two integrated skills textbooks printed by popular publishers of instructional ESL materials. Units built on similar themes were evaluated using frameworks crafted by Andrew Littlejohn (2000, 2011) as a guide, and compared and contrasted against each other in order to point out strengths and weaknesses of the materials used in order to highlight those areas of materials preparation that show room for improvement. Furthermore, this project offered

suggestions for improving and enhancing materials in order to ensure the most effective reading instruction possible.

This project is beneficial for three distinct populations. First, it is beneficial for the publishers of TESOL materials in that it offers insight into the preparation and publication of effective TESOL materials designed for adult ELLs. By highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of the reading materials, this project may offer some insight into the effective preparation of compelling integrated skills materials that allow for English L2 literacy instruction. Second, this project offers benefits to English language instructors by providing insight into the preparation of common classroom materials, as well as by offering a guide by which instructors may evaluate the materials used in their own classrooms. Finally, and most importantly, this project is beneficial to adult English language learners. By focusing on the creation of better, more effective materials, this project will hopefully serve to have a positive effect on the preparation of materials that are relevant, compelling, and conducive to effectual English literacy instruction.

Recommendations

This project was designed as a way to provide insight for those involved in the preparation and publication of TESOL materials as well as to offer a guideline for those English language instructors hoping to evaluate their own literacy materials for effectiveness. Although the evaluation herein explores many factors related to the reading materials in these English language textbooks, it is by no means an exhaustive exploration. The factors analyzed may be entirely different in the textbooks' treatments of other sections, such as listening or grammar. There also are several other areas which an instructor or publisher may want to examine in analyzing materials.

This project spends some time discussing the visuals included with the published materials, but focuses mainly on the use of illustrations versus actual photography. One area of exploration for further evaluation of materials could be the depiction of various cultural backgrounds in the images included with the materials. One may wish to examine the diversity represented in the illustrations and photographs included in the instructional materials. Is there a sense of inclusivity in the cultural depictions? Are the images reflective of the presumed audience? Do they tend to depict only selective ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, or are they inclusive of many varied backgrounds? If students are looking at the imagery and not seeing themselves reflected back in some way, there is likely to be a disconnect between the students and the materials, as a sense of relevance will be difficult to achieve and the significance of the content will diminish. Thus, this particular element of materials preparation is particularly pertinent to adult education, since once of the tenets of adult learner theory is that adults learn better when they are studying materials that are relevant to themselves (Knowles, 1973).

Additionally, this project maintained a very narrow scope in that it focused on two level-one textbooks from series comprising multiple levels. Materials are likely to be different when being prepared for students with a higher level of English language proficiency. It may be helpful for an instructor working with students of varying levels of proficiency to evaluate materials from higher-level textbooks in terms of the same criteria set forth herein. Further, it may be interesting to compare and contrast the materials used in lower-level textbooks versus higher-level textbooks in terms of such elements as authenticity and relevance. The preparation of more challenging materials for students with higher-level proficiencies may offer the opportunity to use more relevant materials such as articles and book excerpts of an academic nature. There

may be a stark difference in the level of authenticity of the materials used in a Level 1 and Level 6 book from the same series.

Instructors wishing to improve the quality of their literacy instruction while utilizing integrated skills textbooks may also wish to supplement their materials with specialized readers specifically designed to improve reading independent of the other three skills. Materials such as these should undergo a similar evaluation to the one presented in this project to ensure relevancy and significance before implementation in the classroom.

Similarly, as technology becomes a more ubiquitous element in the modern classroom, teachers may wish to turn to electronic sources to supplement reading materials. With a vast array of resources just a few clicks away, the possibilities are endless for supplementing literacy instruction with materials that are relevant to students' interests. This also offers instructors the opportunity to allow students to take charge of their own learning by letting them participate in the decision-making process for the choice of supplementary materials. As with any written materials, any electronic supplemental materials should be evaluated before implementation in the classroom.

Finally, although this project focused specifically on literacy instruction through the use of integrated skills textbooks, the guidelines herein could easily be used to evaluate the materials preparation and selection for any of the four skills. For instance, it may be interesting to evaluate the audio materials accompanying popular ESL textbooks. Many textbooks include audio selections that are not representative of real speech and feature scripted rather than authentic conversations. It is good practice to evaluate any materials before implementing their use in the classroom to ensure the creation of an environment that is as conducive to language acquisition as possible, whether that acquisition focuses on one skill or all four. Through careful and

thoughtful planning, ESL materials can transcend the generic and become effective tools that lay the foundation for an enriching, challenging, and engaging classroom environment.

Evaluation Plan

Variables

The biggest variable to consider in the evaluation of this project is the subjectivity of the reviewer conducting the materials evaluation. Any other person wishing to create an evaluation of instructional materials using the questionnaire presented will have to take into account his or her own subjectivity and bias about the materials being evaluated.

Another variable to consider is the use of the frameworks created by Littlejohn (2000, 2011) in the formulation of the questionnaire used for evaluation herein. This questionnaire does not strictly adhere to the Littlejohn's works, but rather is an amalgamation of his suggestions and checklists. Any interpretation of Littlejohn's works is solely that of the researcher.

An additional variable to consider in the evaluation of this project is the specificity of the activities being evaluated. The factors being evaluated are for those activities in the textbooks being labeled solely as reading lessons. No other lessons in the textbooks were evaluated, regardless of their use of reading as a skill. Factors such as decision-making in the classroom and critical language awareness may be treated differently in different activities throughout the textbooks.

One final variable to consider in the evaluation of this project is the use of Level 1 textbooks. The factors examined herein may be treated differently in textbooks created for students with a higher English language proficiency.

Participants

There are four categories of people who make up the populations included in this study. First is the researcher and any other potential evaluator. With each evaluation, the subjectivity of the matter being evaluated must be partially attributed to the person conducting the evaluation. The second category is the publishers and creators of ESL materials. The evaluation herein had to draw conclusions into the thought process behind the creation of these materials. The aim of this study was to provide insight into this thought process as well as ways to address gaps in these materials. The third population is English language instructors who put these materials to use. Having a better understanding of the creation of these materials and the areas of strength and weakness will hopefully serve to inform instruction and to help instructors choose supplemental instructional materials. Additionally, the literature reviewed in Chapter II of this study was largely informed by instructors who shared their best practices for literacy instruction. Finally, the most important population in this study is the students for whom these materials are created and adapted. In order to evaluate this project, the best course of action would be to consult students on how they feel the existing materials hold up in terms of efficacy, and how the suggested modifications affect their learning.

Timeline

The data collected herein is a representative sample of the reading lessons in both textbooks. Given more time and resources, a more substantial review of textbooks from additional publishers may be desirable to increase the efficacy of the project. Additionally, review of higher level textbooks from the same series (e.g., levels four of five) may yield additional contrasting results.

Data Collection/Analysis

Because the bulk of these evaluations rely on subjective inferences into the principles underlying the creation of the materials reviewed herein, the data collection detailed herein is largely affected by the researcher. A similar evaluation conducted by another person may yield different results. Therefore this study cannot be assumed to be an unbiased review of these textbooks, but rather must be considered an informed subjective review of materials.

Additionally, the specificity of the material reviewed herein may affect the results. A more substantial review of the textbooks considered in this or any future study should include analysis of any other lessons that involve reading components, as well as the specific instructions written for the instructor for teaching the material.

Validity Concerns

The two biggest validity concerns are those delineated in the above section regarding data collection and analysis. The subjectivity of the evaluator may affect the validity of the data collected herein and the specificity of the material reviewed may skew any results. Further evaluation of any materials should take into account the treatment of other skills throughout the textbooks, the teaching instructions included in the teacher's editions of the textbooks, and the treatment of the same evaluative factors in materials designed for learners at a higher proficiency level.

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